



# NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL

Academics • Balance • Citizenship

*The Power of Choice*

October 2025

## Based on Principal

Today is September 30th, and school is already in its 7th week. The school year has already developed a uniqueness to it; some things are very positive, some things need some improvement. Overall, attendance is good, but we are still having some- quite a few actually- students arriving late to school. That can cause problems for both students and staff. We kindly ask that our families modify their morning schedules and make the necessary changes to provide the best opportunity for getting your children to school on time and ready to engage. Homeroom for students in grades 6-12 is put in place as a strategic buffer. The ten minutes spent in homeroom gives students an opportunity to prepare mentally for the day ahead, rather than to be thrown immediately into class just after arriving at school. It can give students a brief opportunity to socialize with others in the space, and it also serves as a time where we conduct certain necessary activities, such as taking the lunch count, talking about school expectations, or announcing upcoming events like a field trip or Fun Friday. These things are all important and occur during the time that school is “in-session,” meaning we expect that all of our students are here on time and are where they are scheduled to be. Hopefully, especially for those of you who might be providing transportation to and from school for your students, this will help you to understand that we believe the beginning of the day helps to set up the rest of the day, positively or negatively, depending on how it gets started. Please do what you can to deliver your student to school on time each day. Doors open at 7:35. It will be greatly appreciated!

## Attendance Notices

One aspect of the school year that needs to be addressed is the overall attendance of our students. New Heights, in accordance with statewide expectations, expects/requires that our students attend school at a rate of 90% or higher each school year. Each year, I remind families of this expectation by breaking it down into easy-to-understand chunks, along with the reasons why solid

WELCOME  
TO  
HOMEROOM



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### IMPORTANT DATES

- Oct. 2—Como Field Trip grades 6-12
- Oct. 10—Elementary Field Trip to Axdahl's Farm
- October 15—End of Quarter 1
- Oct. 16-17—No School, Fall Break
- Oct. 20—No School, Grading Day
- Oct. 21—No School K-5, Conferences
- Oct. 23—Picture Day a.m.
- Oct 31—No School, Secondary Conferences 9-1



school attendance is important. So, to begin, let's start with how many days a student can miss and still be in compliance. School will run 170 days each year. Ten percent of 170 is 17. For simplicity, 16 days is the maximum number of absences annually a student may have in order to be compliant with our policy. So, to break that down even further for parents to monitor, a student can miss 4 days per quarter (9 weeks) and still

be compliant. It doesn't always break down that simply, but as a guide, use 4 days of absence every 9 weeks and you will be in the ballpark. Along with that, a lot of people ask what the difference is between excused and unexcused days. In reality, not much. The simple fact is that when students miss school, they miss important instruction, fall behind on assignments, miss learning opportunities, miss social opportunities, and can feel the stress of falling behind and having schoolwork stack up. The main reason a school might discern the difference between excused and unexcused absences is to determine whether or not to file for truancy, which is missing too much school without a valid excuse; meaning unexcused absences. My practice has always been to look at the big picture and try to be supportive of families by reaching out, letting them know when the attendance is becoming a concern, and offer guidance or tools to assist in getting the family back on track. As far as your role as parents goes, we simply ask that you do the best you can to get your children to school on time and as frequently as you can. We further ask that you let us know when and why your children will be absent from school and provide notes from medical providers or mental health providers whenever you have appointments. Those notes can be helpful in determining whether the absence was excused or unexcused. And, as always, we invite you to contact the school if you have questions about topics found in the newsletter or any other topic you have questions about.



## Fall Conferences for Grades 6-12

Fall conferences for students in grades 6-12 are currently scheduled for Friday, October 31st (yes, Halloween), between the hours of 9am and 1pm. In-person conferences have value, but we have seen a drastic decline in conference attendance over the last several years. In order for conferences to have value and continue, we would expect to see more than 60% of our students' parents attend, but our numbers are probably closer to 30%. The turnout for fall conferences is going to guide decision-making regarding the scheduling of future in-person conference sessions, especially for students in grades 6-12. If families aren't interested in coming to school for in-person conferences, as evidenced by low turnout, we would then move to a model where parents request a phone or virtual conference with individual teachers during a 2-week window. That seems to be the direction we are moving in, but time will tell. Mark the 31st down in your planners if you are planning on attending in-person conferences this fall.





## Late Buses

We have had a lot of issues with the busing system this year. We do not know exactly why we have had so many late buses, but we are in constant communication with the bus garage and routers, and we are hopeful that these remaining issues will be resolved soon. If you have concerns about your child's bus situation, feel free to call the school and give us your concern, and we will do our best to get it resolved.

## Cold Weather Gear

As we progress through the school year, the temps will continue to fall and, sooner or later, the snow will be upon us. That means that we need our parents to start sending in cold-weather gear for your student in grades K-5 so they can participate in outdoor recess each day. Cold weather gear includes hats, coats, snow pants, gloves or mittens, and winter boots. All of these items need to be in place to ensure our students can safely participate in recess. We also recommend that parents find a way to label each piece of clothing with your child's name to prevent loss. You might also consider taking photos in case something gets lost. Photos help teachers to find missing garments. Each year, we end up with a lot of mismatched items that belong to one of our students, but are not claimed. We hope to prevent the unnecessary loss and expense this can cause, so encouraging you to label your child's gear is the best way we know of to do this. Please have cold-weather gear ready and at school when the temps consistently dip below 40 degrees. We appreciate your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

*Mr. Tom Kearney*

*Principal/Superintendent*



## FUNDRAISING FOR NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL

***OfficeMax/Office Depot is fundraising for New Heights!***

Office Max/Office Depot in Stillwater is giving New Heights 5% back on qualifying purchases in store.

~OR~

Order online using our school code: 70055224





# Introducing Harmony Gonzalez

## *Special Education Teacher*

### 1. What inspired you to become a teacher?

I used to teach theatre classes at different schools around Minnesota. I figured out I loved teaching and wanted to keep doing it.

### 2. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I love making connections with students and watching them accomplish goals with my help.

### 3. What is the most exciting thing you've ever done?

The most exciting thing I've done is eloping with my husband! We're planning a big reception but we decided to go to the courthouse back in February!

### 4. What is something people would be surprised to know about you?

I hold a bachelor's degree in Theatre and love performing in musicals around the community. I was just in Anything Goes as a core tap dancer.

### 5. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Petting my two cats and performing in musicals!



### **Attendance:**

If your child will be absent, please remember to call Anne Humphrey at 651-439-1962 to report it to the main office or email [attendance@newheightsschool.org](mailto:attendance@newheightsschool.org)

### **Text Alerts**

New Heights occasionally sends out text alerts to families for various reasons. The alerts are sent through our student management system JMC which shows up on your phone as an 800 number. We recommend adding this number to your phone contacts so that the texts aren't mistaken as spam.

844-575-7269

# Food Service Updates & Reminders

## A La Carte Items:

New Heights will have several types of items for sale as A La Carte throughout the school year to students in **grades 6-12 only**.

These items are available at an additional cost to families as they are not a part of the free meals program.

If you DO NOT want your child(ren) purchasing A La Carte items, please let the school know in advance.

## FREE MEALS PROGRAM

Free Meals are available to all students this year. This includes both breakfast and lunch throughout the school year.

**\*\*Please note:** This program does not include ala carte items or milk-only purchases.

**For more information please contact Lindsay Berberich** at 651-439-1962 or [Lberberich@newheightsschool.org](mailto:Lberberich@newheightsschool.org).



## Lunch Ordering:

- School lunches will be ordered each morning for the current day.
- If students will be arriving late, they will need to call in their order before **8:15 am** to receive a school lunch on that day.

## Educational Benefits-Important Info!

*\*Please remember to fill out the application for educational benefits meals even though lunches **are free** for all students this year.*

## Milk Purchases:

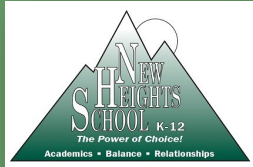
Milk purchased without a lunch costs \$0.65

If your student would like to purchase milk, please deposit funds to their lunch account.



## **BREAKFAST UPDATE:**

New Heights breakfast will be available from **7:35 am—7:50 am** in the school cafeteria. In the case of late buses, exceptions can be made to allow students to eat.



# October Monthly Planner

| Sun | Mon                            | Tue                                                             | Wed                       | Thu                                                                                                                                                           | Fri                                                                                                                                | Sat |
|-----|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 28  | 29                             | 30                                                              | 1                         | 2<br>Secondary<br>Como Field<br>Trip<br><br>COMO PARK<br>ZOO & CONSERVATORY | 3                                                                                                                                  | 4   |
| 5   | 6                              | 7                                                               | 8                         | 9                                                                                                                                                             | 10<br>Elementary<br>Axdahl's Field<br>Trip<br> | 11  |
| 12  | 13                             | 14                                                              | 15<br>End of<br>Quarter 1 | 16<br>No School—Fall Break                                                                                                                                    | 17                                                                                                                                 | 18  |
| 19  | 20<br>No School<br>Grading Day | 21<br>No School for<br>students<br>in K-5 due to<br>Conferences | 22                        | 23<br>PICTURE DAY<br>                                                     | 24                                                                                                                                 | 25  |
| 26  | 27                             | 28                                                              | 29                        | 30<br>Middle<br>School<br>Dance                                                                                                                               | 31 No School<br>Secondary<br>Conferences<br>  | 1   |